



Transportation, Traffic & Parking Department

City of New Haven

200 Orange Street G3
New Haven, CT 06510

John DeStefano, Jr.
Mayor

Michael Piscitelli, AICP
Director

Prepared Testimony

Respectfully submitted to the Transportation Committee
March 4, 2009

**RE: SB149, An Act Concerning the Installation of Red Light Cameras by Municipalities
SB150, An Act Concerning the Installation of Speed Detecting Cameras on Highways**

Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrera and members of the Committee, my name is Michael Piscitelli and I am the Director of the Transportation, Traffic and Parking Department of the City of New Haven. I appear before you to respectfully request your support for SB 149 and SB 150.

As you will see in the submitted testimony from government officials and many citizens working with us, traffic safety is a top priority in New Haven. Unlike any other municipality in Connecticut, New Haven streets are shared spaces. Of the 10 largest cities in New England, New Haven has the highest percentage of residents who walk to work. In fact, less than half of all New Haveners take a single-occupant vehicle to work, a startlingly high figure even for a center city.

With so many multi-modal users, there is a correspondingly high number of accidents. In 2006 alone, we experienced over 1,700 motor vehicle accidents involving a pedestrian and / or a cyclist.

In response to the high number of pedestrian-related accidents (over four every day) and severity of these tragedies, the City recently launched the Street Smarts traffic safety campaign. With the help of tireless volunteers from Yale University, Yale New Haven Hospital, Elm City Cycling and others, Street Smarts is reaching motorists, cyclists and pedestrians across the region. Street Smarts calls for our attentiveness at all times; our patience with others; and a willingness to share the road.

We realize, however, that there is no single solution to our traffic safety challenge. In 2002, our department tested red light cameras. We found over 400 red light violations at just one intersection over a 24-hour test period. Since it would be near impossible to have police officers enforce the same location over extended periods, pedestrians, cyclists and other motorists truly are at risk due to the extremely high level of red light and speeding violations.

In New Haven, we believe speed and red light camera systems are proven technologies that will help clear the box and allow for safe passage for pedestrians on the "walk" signal and cyclists and motorists on "green". Moreover, camera enforcement will help ensure that high quality traffic engineering systems work as designed. Our citizens expect that, and we sincerely request your assistance with our efforts.

In addition to my remarks, I have attached suggested administrative changes to SB149 and I will leave those comments with our submitted testimony. Thank you again; your consideration is truly appreciated.

CITY OF NEW HAVEN

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Michael Piscitelli, AICP
Director

Transportation, Traffic and Parking Department

Proposed Technical / Administrative Amendments
Respectfully submitted to the Transportation Committee
March 4, 2009

RE: SB149, An Act Concerning the Installation of Red Light Cameras by Municipalities

Section 1(c) In New Haven, Police Officers and Parking Enforcement Officers both are authorized to issue parking violations. The City requests that this section be amended to allow not only a sworn police officer, but also an authorized designee to review the recorded images and issue the citation in a manner consistent with existing practice for the issuance of parking tickets.

In order to meet the "five day" deadline to mail a violation to the registered owner, the City requests language which allows authorized representatives to access the records of the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) as made available to the municipal police department and / or the DMV directly.

Section 1(g) The State Traffic Commission (STC) is a resource for Red Light (and Speed) enforcement programs and the City recommends the proposed legislation go beyond simply a report of location. In order to establish consistent practice across the State, the STC should establish general guidelines and then review / approve installations using the same process now in effect for the establishment of a traffic signal.

Section 2(c) The City often must address issues of "stolen plates" and unregistered motor vehicles on public streets. In the event the registration records of the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles are inaccurate (eg-mail is returned), the City requests a provision allowing for review of other records, as publicly available, to identify and notice the owner of the motor vehicle.

Section 2(f) The legislation, if approved, should include a provision which allows for late payment penalties. The City currently assesses late penalties for unpaid parking tickets, and this is a necessary approach which ensures timely payment and compliance with local Ordinance.

Likewise, collections are a challenge for parking tickets and other local fines. The City requests a broader approach to the collection of unpaid fines, allowing for the use of any / all legal means to collect fines due and payable to the City. Such means should include use of a collection agency; civil proceedings; impoundment of the motor vehicle; and withholding of DMV registration or renewal. The Committee may wish to consider a threshold level (eg. - \$200.00 or more in unpaid fines or other criteria in support of broader collection efforts).